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***** Media Invitation *****

U.S., Marine Corps introduce first Operational F-35 Squadron

Official Marine Corps F-35B basing, re-designation ceremony

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION YUMA, ARIZ. (Nov. 20, 2012) – A century into Marine Corps aviation, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing will introduce its first F-35B squadron during an official ceremony at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz., Nov. 20 at 1 p.m.

During the ceremony Marine All Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 121, formerly a 3rd MAW F/A-18 Hornet squadron, will be re-designated as the Corps' first operational F-35 squadron, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 121. VMFA-121 will host the ceremony in its hangar, where the short takeoff and vertical landing F-35B aircraft will be on display for military leaders, government officials and other guests to view.

The F-35B is slated to replace the Marine Corps' F/A-18 Hornet, AV-8B Harrier and EA-6B Prowler. It will provide multi-role, fifth-generation capabilities in the form of one common tactical fixed-wing aircraft, reducing maintenance costs while ensuring the Marine Corps

maintains the tactical aircraft dominance required to deter potential adversaries and protect the nation's interests.

The arrival of the F-35B Lightning II to Yuma signifies the Marine Corps' forward progress in transitioning the F-35 from a testing and training aircraft to a fully operational tactical aviation capability.

Media interested in covering the ceremony should contact Capt. Staci Reidinger at 928-269-3609 or by email at staci.reidinger@usmc.mil no later than 5 p.m., Nov. 16. Media who RSVP will be provided e-mail updates and escort access to the ceremony. When reserving a spot, be sure to include: name of organization, names, phone numbers and email addresses of all attending to include camera crew and any specific coverage or interview requests.

Those attending are asked to arrive at the MCAS Yuma North Gate no later than 10:30 a.m., Nov. 20 and will be required to show an official Photo ID and media credentials.

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